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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 005203

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DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY FOR A/S KAREN HARBERT

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SUBJECT: DEPT OF ENERGY DEPUTY SECRETARY CLAY SELL
DISCUSSES RANGE OF ISSUES WITH PRESIDENT URIBE

Classified By: DCM Milton Drucker for reason 1.4 (d).

11. (C) Summary. The U.S. Deputy Secretary of Energy, Clay Sell, met with President Uribe on May 20 during the Colombian Oil and Gas Investment Conference in Cartagena. President Uribe thanked the Deputy Secretary for U.S. support in fighting narcotrafficking and terrorism and asked him to relay to President Bush the GOC commitment to these efforts. The President also expressed appreciation for the Deputy Secretary's presence in supporting the energy conference and

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Colombian efforts to promote the attractiveness of the hydrocarbon sector. The Deputy Secretary stated that DOE would follow-up by supporting small and medium size exploration firm interest in Colombia. End Summary.

12. (C) The Deputy Secretary of Energy met with President Uribe on May 20 together with the Minister of Mines and Energy Luis Mejia, the President of Ecopetrol, Isaac Yanovich, and the Director of the National Hydrocarbon Agency, Armando Zamora. With the DepSec were DOE A/S for Policy and International Affairs Karen Harbert and the DCM. President Uribe began by thanking the Deputy Secretary for U.S. support in the battle against narcotrafficking and terrorism. He noted that that morning, he had met with some Europeans who asked why Colombia had such a close relationship with the United States and he explained the coincidence of interests with the US and the help the US was providing to Colombia. Uribe, as he has done with other visitors, implicitly referred to the Crime and Narcotics Center (CNC) numbers of hectares in coca cultivation. He noted the failure to reduce the area devoted to coca farming in Colombia and insisted this would lead to increased efforts to reduce the area under cultivation for coca. Uribe stated that Colombia needs an additional base for aerial eradication. He added that Colombia now is making a huge effort in manual eradication, dedicating almost 1000 people to the effort, but it is not enough and more effort was needed for aerial eradication.

12. (C) Uribe explicitly charged Deputy Secretary Sell with the task of letting President Bush know that Colombia's determination to rid itself of the cocaine curse was undiminished and the recent data only strengthened the government's resolve. Uribe continued that the Colombian government remained equally determined to eliminate terrorism in Colombia. He explained all the data on criminal activity for the last two years show a steep reduction in crime. He also emphasized the increase in law enforcement effectiveness was accompanied by an increase in respect for human rights by government forces. He noted the importance of human rights to the U.S. Congress and added human rights continue to be a GOC high priority. Uribe explained his policy rested on two pillars: transparency and efficiency.

13. (C) Sell began by explaining he had met with U.S. companies (just prior to the meeting with President Uribe, Sell had met with U.S. energy sector investors in Colombia) who were in agreement that the security situation they faced had improved dramatically. Evidence of this were the concerns they expressed on non-security related issues. The President inquired about those issues and asked Minister of Mines and Energy Mejia to respond. The issues centered on regulatory matters related to electrical energy, Mejia explained, would be resolved by the Ministry before the end of the year. The president, apparently interested in this time commitment, added the dates to his PDA as the minister spoke.

14. (C) Uribe insisted that he understood stable rules formulated in a transparent way were essential to stimulate increased investment in the energy sector. President Uribe thanked Sell for the effort which went into the successful conference on oil and gas exploration in Colombia, noting that two successes had already occurred - the signing of an agreement for exploration with an Indian firm earlier that day and a dramatic increase in interest in Colombian hydrocarbon exploration. Sell promised follow-up, noting DOE would help organize a small meeting of small and medium size firms that might take place in the United States in August. The companies involved would include exploration firms prepared to take the risks inherent in developing Colombia's

oil prospects. Uribe was pleased to hear the news. Mejia and Zamora promised to support the effort.

15. (C) Finally, Uribe spent a fair amount of time questioning Sell about the U.S. approach to using biodiesel in order to diversify the fuel mix in the United States. Uribe was interested in its applicability for Colombia as an agriculture dependent economy.

16. (U) The DOE Deputy Secretary was not able to clear this message before his departure. Post will report conference details via septel.

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